



# Middleton St George Parish Council

[www.middleton-st-george.org.uk](http://www.middleton-st-george.org.uk)

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21<sup>st</sup> May, 2018

Lisa Hutchinson – Planning Case Officer  
Planning Department  
The Town Hall  
Darlington  
DL1 5QT

Dear Lisa,

**Re: 17/01175/FUL**

**Residential Housing Development consisting of 61 dwellings together with car parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure (amended description) (amended site plan and additional adoptable areas plans received 29 January 2018, amended site plans and design and access statement received 5 April 2018, amended tree survey, ecology report, floor plans and elevations received 6 April 2018, amended Transport Statement and Planning Statement received 23 April 2018).**

**Field At OSGR E435292 N513607 Yarm Road Oak Tree MIDDLETON ST GEORGE**

We would ask that this response be read in conjunction with our previous response dated 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2018, as all the material grounds stated within it are still valid.

However, the up to date situation regarding number of houses now having received planning permission since, and including “Gladman” (Sadberge Road), and those pending, are as follows:

## **Overdevelopment Situation in Middleton St George** **(as at April 2018)**

### **Permission Granted (since and including “Gladman”:**

- 13/00940/OUT Up to 250 dwellings, Sadberge Road (under construction)
- 16/00578/OUT 350 dwellings and local services at Durham Tees Valley Airport
- 16/00396/OUT – 55 Houses Lancaster House at Durham Tees Valley Airport
- 16/00972/FUL - 27 dwellings off Middleton Lane (under construction)
- 17/00847/FUL – 44 houses Yarm Road (under construction)
- 15/00976/OUT / 17/01151/RM1 – 198 dwellings Grendon Gardens
- 17/00911/FUL - 10 houses plus convenience store, Yarm Road

**Total 934 houses**  
**+ 1 convenience store**

We haven't even added in the potential number of vehicles from the applications that are pending and expected:

Pending:

- 16/00976/OUT - Up to 226 dwellings and primary school, Station Road
- 17/01195/OUT – 430 houses plus school and supermarket
- 17/01175/FUL – 63 houses Yarm Road
- 18/00275/OUT - 280 houses, plus 60 bed care home at Neasham Road

**An additional: 999**

Other Applications which are expected:

- All the remaining sites on the "Call for Sites" List

**Cumulative Total of houses: 1,933**  
**(which would mean at least 3,866 vehicles (an underestimate)**  
**+ 2 convenience stores, and a 60-bed care home (with extra private and commercial vehicles)**

The Government's housing figure methodology suggests 177 houses per year for the borough of Darlington. However, Darlington Borough Council's "Five Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement", published in February 2018, gives a figure of 569 houses per year. There is confusion because while Darlington Borough Council has confirmed it is working to a much larger figure than the methodology, it also says it now has a five-year supply of housing - which in theory should reduce the number of applications being approved. This five year supply has not been reported to the Cabinet and so the confusion continues.

Two of the Key Sustainability Factors for Middleton St George are no longer valid (ref. Darlington Borough Council's 2016 Interim Planning Position Statement); the GP Surgery is no longer located within 1km of the centre of the village (in fact it is 1.3 miles from the centre), and the bus service, as well as only being an hourly service weekdays until 6pm, does not serve the GP Surgery in its new location (we continually request an improved bus service, but so far in vain). We need, in order of priority (a) an improved route to take in the GP Surgery, (b) restoration of evening and Sunday service (c) restoration of half-hourly service, and (d) route linking other villages and Yarm.

The Parish Council consider that it is extremely unjust to expect Middleton St George to supply three times as many houses as the rest of Darlington, especially given the fact that, now that the Council has published its Brown Field Land Register, there is the potential for developing that land prior to doing so on greenfield sites, as recommended by the Government, and also taking account of the fact that Middleton St George now fails two of the "sustainable village" criteria.

The Government recommends prioritising use of brownfield sites. This is much documented, so needs no explanation. The reasoning is because green field development should be avoided if there are brownfield sites available. Since DBC has produced a Brownfield Register, there is evidence to show that there are brownfield sites available in the Borough.

The Parish Council does not believe that there can be any economic benefit to the village from the development of the Application Site, or that even if there were some marginal improvement to the village, that that can outweigh the significant environmental disadvantages which the village will suffer.

Below are 3 of the Objectives, together with some relevant sections of the draft NDP, which we would want to see maintained and considered. We would welcome further consultation with Darlington Borough Council on how these may be implemented.

*Objective 1:*

*Ensure that new developments are sustainable and make a contribution to the quality of life and quality of local services for the people who live or work in Middleton St George.*

*Objective 2:*

*Maintain, protect and enhance green spaces and ensure that these are of a high quality and allow the community to use them for health and well-being. In pursuit of this ensure that the landscape character is maintained and enhanced and that the coalescence of Middleton St George with adjacent settlements is prevented.*

*Objective 3:*

*Maintain and enhance local distinctiveness including village character through the protection or restoration of the built and natural heritage of Middleton St George.*

*The strategic priorities for the Neighbourhood Development Plan set by the community are to (i) retain a village character for Middleton St George, (ii) maintain and where possible improve the quality of life for existing residents and (iii), maintain and where possible improve local services and infrastructure.*

*Judging by consultation, the quality and accessibility of the environment in is an important consideration to the quality of life of residents. Hence environmental protection and improvements are to be sought through the Neighbourhood Development Plan.*

It is well documented that, as a result of the *Gladman* appeal, the Borough Council

- a) Must accelerate the adoption of new policy, even on an interim basis, and
- b) Until then must determine applications on the basis of the NPPF

However, we submit that this does not mean taking the three dimensions in para. 7 of the NPPF as a tick-box test. "So sustainable development is about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations. The planning system is about helping to make this happen." It may not therefore be sustainable to allow – or encourage – developers to use the void created by the absence of a new local planning policy where to do so would be to negate the proposition that "neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community. (NPPF para 184) The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area." **The local planning authority should be enabled to pay full attention to the fact that the emergent neighbourhood development plan is unable to be progressed pending new local policies being developed against which the NDP can be**

**aligned.** The approval of this application will negate future opportunities for constructive neighbourhood planning within Middleton St George. That is a clear demonstration of non-sustainability, and one does not need to look further than the way in which the social role is expressed in NPPF para 7.

**Weight must still be given to saved policies in the existing Local Plan.**

Middleton St George Parish Council is of the opinion that, based on the grounds detailed above, any adverse impacts of granting permission for this application would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework (NPPF). We do not believe that it is sustainable to allow this development to be built, which will cause more congestion. The economic, social, and environmental roles of the proposed development are overstated; this would be a dormitory settlement, with its residents travelling to work (and let us not forget the lack of an adequate bus service).

This application is also premature, given the fact that we are taking part in a Consultation with DBC in the context of the Local Plan, and therefore no further applications should be granted permission until such time as this process has been finalised.

Comments in reference, specifically, to the Application documents:

- We are concerned that the Amended Planning Statement says that it is a “logical infill site” (para 2.5, page 2). This does not constitute a valid reason to approve the application. Neither does presenting an argument that planning permission has been granted for neighbouring sites (para 4.1, page 3).
- We consider that the retention of existing mature trees to the southern boundary and woodland to the northwest of the site is extremely important, as an essential feature of the existing landscape (we note this is mentioned in para 7.28, page 23 of the Amended Planning Statement). We would not like to see any further loss of trees or hedgerows.
- The Amended Transport Statement states incorrectly that there are 30 new units further along Yarm Road (page 4). In actual fact, planning permission was granted for two developments; one consisting of 44 houses, and the other of 10 houses and a Coop Convenience Store. This would mean that the vehicle movements from these developments, in addition to those from the other developments (see above), taken with the existing traffic, would add seriously to the safety hazards and congestion in the location of the site.
- The photos in the Amended Transport Statement must have been taken during off-peak hours, or on a Sunday, as they show hardly any, or no, vehicles. This seriously belies the fact that there is already severe congestion along those roads (as has been well documented previously), and with the build-out of the new developments, this will be exacerbated.
- The Amended Transport Statement proposes to add more bus stops. However, unless the inadequate bus service is improved, there is absolutely no point in adding more bus stops. This is pure hyperbole, and designed to sway the argument in favour of granting permission, but in fact is worthless as an argument. The Transport Statement also states incorrectly that the bus service is every 30 minutes, when in fact it is every hour during the day, with no evening or Sunday service, and actually only passes the site early morning and late afternoon, due to its current route and timetable.

- We would draw your attention to the Environmental Health Officer Response regarding the noise from the railway. This is a major constraint, and will have a major impact. The issue of railway noise was highlighted in responses to both the applications for development along Yarm Road, but not taken on board. We would strongly recommend that this material ground for objection is taken into consideration in respect of this application.

**Based on the grounds detailed above, and those in our previous letter, permission should be refused.**

Yours sincerely,

Alan Macnab,  
Clerk to the Parish Council.